

Message Text

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PAGE 01 RABAT 02618 01 OF 02 031213Z

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DODE-00 USIA-06 /082 W

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R 031125Z JUN 75

FM AMEMBASSY RABAT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5563

INFO CUFHRS/AMEMBASSY ALGIERS 2535

AMEMBASSY DAKAR

AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

AMEMBASSY TUNIS

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 RABAT 2618

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR PBOR MO SS SP

SUBJ: SPANISH SAHARA DEVELOPMENTS: GOM DIPLOMATIC ACTIVITY,
AND MOROCCAN-ALGERIAN TENSIONS, INCREASE

REF: RABAT 2572 AND 2584 AND NOUAKCHOTT 1074 (ALL NOTAL)

1. SUMMARY: PAST FEW DAYS HAVE WITNESSED FLURRY OF GOM
DIPLOMATIC ACTIVITY ON SPANISH SAHARA AND INCREASING IDENTIFICATION
OF ALGERIA AS MOROCCO'S PRINCIPAL BETE NOIRE. UN MISSION'S
MEETING WITH F POLISARIO REPRESENTATIVES IN ALGERIA AND ITS
INTERVIEW WITH F POLISARIO-HELD SPANISH SOLDIERS NOT REPORTED
HERE, AND ALGERIAN PRESS COMMENTARY ON SAHARA QUESTION COVERED
(IN HIGHLY CRITICAL TERMS) ONLY IN NON-GOVERNMENT PRESS.
ALGERIA'S DE FACTO RECOGNITION OF F POLISARIO WILL DO NOTHING
TO IMPROVE MOROCCAN-ALGERIAN RELATIONS. SPANISH EMBASSY
NOTES THAT SPANIARDS BEGINNING TO LEAVE SAHARA AND THAT
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PAGE 02 RABAT 02618 01 OF 02 031213Z

THERE IS ALARM AT HIGH LEVELS OF GOM AT QUICKENING PACE OF

EVENTS. MOROCCANS MAY WELL FEEL COMPELLED TO INTERVENE MILITARILY IN SAHARA IF SPANISH LEAVE QUICKLY, AND GOM'S CONTINUING DIPLOMATIC CAMPAIGN CLEARLY DESIGNED TO AVOID THIS EVENTUALITY. END SUMMARY.

2. DIPLOMATIC ACTIVITY: SPANISH ANNOUNCEMENT OF INTENTION TO SPEED DEPARTURE FROM SPANISH SAHARA HAS PRODUCED FLURRY OF DIPLOMATIC ACTIVITY AND GREAT UPSUREGE IN SPECULATION HERE. ON MAY 24, SPANISH PRI MIN NAVARRO RECEIVED MOROCCAN AMBASSADOR FILALI FOR WHAT PRESS HERE DESCRIBED AS THREE-HOUR INTERVIEW. ALSO, SPANISH AND EGYPTIAN EMBASSIES HERE HAVE TOLD US THAT EGYPTIAN FON MIN FAHMI WILL VISIT MADRID IN FIRST HALF OF JUNE, APPARENTLY IN CONNECTION WITH LONG-RUMORED EGYPTIAN MEDIATION EFFORT ON SAHARA PROBLEM. EGYPTIAN AMBASSADOR TOLD AMBASSADOR NEUMANN MAY 30 THAT SITUATION WAS TENSE, THAT SOMEONE MIGHT MOVE TOO FAST, AND THAT THEREFORE MODERATION SHOULD BE COUNSELLED. HE IMPLIED THAT URGING RESTRAINT WOULD BE CORNERSTONE OF FAHMI'S PRESENTATION. EGYPTIAN AMBASSADOR NOTED IN PASSING THAT SADAT AND FAHMI BOTH WERE HIGHLY IMPRESSED WITH KING HASSAN BUT THAT FAHMI HAD NO USE FOR FON MIN LARAKI OR INFO MIN BENHIMA. PRESS ALSO ANNOUNCED OVER WEEKEND THAT MOROCCAN AMBASSADOR IN ALGIERS HAD DELIVERED MESSAGE FROM KING HASSAN TO PRESIDENT BOUMEDIENE.

3. ANOTHER INITIATIVE WAS MOROCCAN REQUEST THAT PRESIDENT RAISE SAHARA ISSUE DURING HIS MAY 31-JUNE 1 VISIT TO SPAIN. TWO LEADING OPPOSITION POLITICIANS -- BOUCETTA OF ISTIQLAL AND BOUABID OF SOCIALIST UNION -- CALLED ON AMBASSADOR AT REQUEST OF KING MAY 30 TO MAKE PRESENTATIONS URGING THAT PRESIDENT INTERVENE WITH SPANISH ON MOROCCO'S BEHALF IN SITUATION WHICH HAD BECOME "DANGEROUS AND ALARMING." (RABAT 2572 AND 2582, BOTH NOTAL). BOTH PRESENTATIONS QUITE MODERATE IN TONE. ONE OF POLITICIANS SAID THAT KING MIGHT SEND SEPARATE MESSAGE OF HIS OWN TO PRESIDENT.

4. SITUATION IN SAHARA: FREQUENCY OF COMMUNIQUEES FROM MOROCCAN-BACKED LIBERATION AND UNITY FRONT (FLU) HAS DIMINISHED BUT ACTIVITY BY FLU AND ALSO BY PRO-INDEPENDENCE AND ALLEGEDLY ALGERIAN BACKED F POLISARIO APPARENTLY CONTINUES. CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 RABAT 02618 01 OF 02 031213Z

ON MAY 29 MOROCCAN RADIO ANNOUNCED THAT FLU HAD STAGED ITS LARGEST OPERATION PREVIOUS EVENING WHEN IT ATTACKED SPANISH PATROL NEAR HAWZIYYAH SETTING FIRE TO VEHICLES ABANDONED BY SPANISH AND THEN WITHDRAWING SAFELY. SPANISH EMBASSY HERE TELLS US THAT F POLISARIO ATTACKED GROUP OF NOMAD TROOPS AND TOOK THOSE WHO REFUSED TO RALLY TO CAUSE WITH THEM TO MAURITANIA. IN LIGHT OF THIS SITUATION AND OF GOM ANNOUNCEMENT ON WITHDRAWAL, SPANISH EMBASSY HERE SAYS SPANISH POPULATION

OF SAHARA BEGINNING TO LEAVE COLONY IN SUBSTANTIAL NUMBERS.

5. ALGERIAN CONNECTION: ALGERIA'S BETE NOIRE IMAGE GROWING BY LEAPS AND BOUNDS. IN THEIR PRESENTATIONS TO AMBASSADOR, BOTH BOUCETTA AND BOUABID NOTED THAT ALGERIANS WERE VILLAINS IN PIECE. BOUCETTA SAID HE EXPECTED PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT OF ALGERIAN SUPPORT FOR F POLISARIO WHICH HE CHARACTERIZED AS MAOIST, AND BOUABID SUSPECTED THAT ALGERIANS WERE WORKING IN COLLUSION WITH SPANISH TO CREATE INDEPENDENT SAHARA. ON ALGERIAN-F POLISARIO RELATIONS, SPANISH EMBASSY CLAIMS THAT A PALACE SOURCE

BELIEVES ALGERIANS PREPARED TO MAKE 10,000 ARMED MEN AVAILABLE TO F POLISARIO FOR POSSIBLE USE AGAINST MOROCCANS. ALGERIAN EMBASSY SOURCE SAYS GOA RECOGNITION OF F POLISARIO IS DE FACTO, BUT NOT YET DE JURE.

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PAGE 01 RABAT 02618 02 OF 02 031205Z

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AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 RABAT 2618

6. SEMI-OFFICIAL MEDIA COVERAGE OF UN MISSION'S VISIT TO ALGERIA DIFFERED SHARPLY FROM THAT OF NON-GOVERNMENT PAPERS. FORMER HAS SO FAR CONFINED ITSELF TO BRIEF ARTICLES ON MISSION'S MEETING WITH SAHARAN REFUGEES, WHO WERE DESCRIBED AS BEING FOR MOST PART FROM MALI AND NIGER. PRESS ALSO CRITICIZED ALGERIAN REFUSAL TO ALLOW MOROCCAN JOURNALISTS TO COVER MISSION'S VISIT TO TINDOUF. NON-GOVERNMENT ISTIQLAL PAPERS, BY CONTRAST, REPRODUCED ALGERIAN PRESS SERVICE'S WOOLLY COMMENTARY ON SAHARA SITUATION AND DENOUNCED IT EDITORIALY AS FURTHER EVIDENCE OF ALGERIAN PERFIDIOUSNESS. NO PAPER HAS SO FAR MENTIONED MISSION'S MEETING WITH F POLISARIO DELEGATION OR WITH CAPTURED SPANISH SOLDIERS AND SAHRAOUI DESERTERS.

7. ATTITUDE TOWARDS SPANISH: MOROCCAN-SPANISH RELATIONS REMAIN TENSE AND SUSPICION OF ALGERIAN-SPANISH COLLUSION IS UNDIMINISHED. SPANISH EMBASSY TELLS US THAT THREE
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PAGE 02 RABAT 02618 02 OF 02 031205Z

SPANISH JOURNALISTS AND ONE PHOTOGRAPHER WHO HAD COME HERE TO COVER UN MISSION'S VISIT TO MOROCCO WERE NOT PERMITTED TO ENTER COUNTRY AND WERE DEPORTED TO MADRID AFTER 24-HOUR INCARCERATION AT CASABLANCA AIRPORT. SPANISH EMBASSY'S

APPARENT DECISION TO LEAVE SAHARA SOONER RATHER THAN LATER IS CAUSING GOM GREAT PAIN GIVEN APPARENT ABILITY OF F POLISARIO TO DOMINATE SITUATION IN COLONY.

8. COMMENT: MOROCCO AND ALGERIA APPEAR FOR MOMENT TO BE ON COLLISION COURSE IN SAHARA, AND REMOVAL OF ANY DOUBT THAT F POLISARIO HAS ALGERIAN BACKING WILL DO NOTHING TO IMPROVE MATTERS. MOROCCANS SEEM QUITE AROUSED, AND WE BELIEVE THAT, WERE SPANISH TO BEGIN WITHDRAWAL FROM SAHARA AT ONCE, MOROCCAN ARMY WOULD VERY LIKELY MOVE QUICKLY INTO COLONY. IN FACE OF THIS TURN OF EVENTS, KING APPARENTLY REDOUBLING HIS EFFORTS AT ACHIEVING A DIPLOMATIC SOLUTION, DIRECTLY AND THROUGH INTERMEDIARIES, IN BOTH MADRID AND ALGIERS. HE MAY BE EXPECTED TO RECEIVE SUPPPORT IN THIS EFFORT FROM MAURITANIA, WHOSE POSITION SEEMS TO BE IN HARMONY WITH MOROCCO'S (NOUAKCHOTT 1074 NOTAL).
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